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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/989,702	11/21/2001	Hayato Kikuchi	108426-00010	9591

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ARENT FOX KINTNER PLOTKIN & KAHN
1050 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N.W.
SUITE 400
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

EXAMINER

BOTTORFF, CHRISTOPHER

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
	3618

DATE MAILED: 03/04/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/989,702	KIKUCHI ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit
	Christopher Bottorff	3618

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 12 December 2003.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 7-10 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) 9 and 10 is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 7 and 8 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

The amendment filed December 12, 2003 has been entered. Claims 1-6 and 11-20 are entered. Claims 7-10 are pending.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Kakinami et al. US 5,230,400.

Kakinami et al. discloses an auto-cruise apparatus having a vehicle to vehicle distance controller within CPU 3, input means SW4-SW7 that enable a driver to set a vehicle to vehicle distance and a vehicle speed, a constant vehicle speed controller within CPU 3, and a mode selector within CPU 3. The input means includes a cruise switch SW 6 and a vehicle to vehicle distance setting means SW 7 for setting the set vehicle to vehicle distance. Furthermore, this apparatus functions as claimed. See column 5, lines 3-5 and 65-68, column 6, lines 1-68, column 7, lines 1-8 and 55-68, and column 8, lines 1-64.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

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The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kakinami et al. US 5,230,400 in view of Nishimura US 5,695,020.

Kakinami et al. discloses the apparatus as described above, but does not disclose that the apparatus operates as a function of the operating time of the input means as defined in claims 2 and 8. However, Nishimura teaches that the practice of controlling the operation of an auto-cruise apparatus as a function of the operating time of the input means was old and well known in the art at the time the invention was made. See column 7, lines 38-62, and column 8, lines 39-46. From the teachings of Nishimura, operating the system of Kakinami et al. as a function of the operating time of the input means would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made. This would allow a switch input means to perform multiple functions without the need for additional switches.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 9 and 10 are allowed. Claim 9 states that the vehicle to vehicle distance setting means is capable of setting the vehicle to vehicle distance to at least a long, middle, or short distance. The prior art does not teach a vehicle to vehicle distance setting means, in combination with the further limitations of the claims, with structure

that is capable of establishing a long, middle, or short distance. Claim 10 is allowable in that it depends from claim 9.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed December 12, 2003 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicants contend that Kakinami et al. and Nishimura et al. do not teach a vehicle-to-vehicle distance setting means or a mode selector. However, switch SW 7 of Kakinami et al. is a vehicle-to-vehicle distance setting means and a mode selector is provided as the circuitry in CPU 3 that responds to the input devices. Switch SW 7 sets the vehicle-to-vehicle distance as Ls, which is then used to calculate Ld and Lu. See column 5, line 68, through column 6, line 3; and column 6, lines 6-9 and 32-36. The circuitry of CPU 3 performs a switching from the speed control mode to the distance control mode (see column 9, lines 34-40, and column 10, lines 9-11) and from the distance control mode to the speed control mode (see column 7, lines 62-65, and column 9, lines 46-52).

Furthermore, the alleged distinctions discussed on pages 10 and 11 of the remarks rely upon the manner in which the claimed apparatus functions to distinguish the claimed apparatus over the structures of the prior art. However, claims directed to an apparatus must be distinguished from the prior art in terms of structure rather than function. *In re Schreiber*, 128 F.3d 1473, 1477-78, 44 USPQ2d 1429, 1431-32 (Fed. Cir. 1997). “[A]pparatus claims cover what a device *is*, not what a device *does*

Hewlett-Packard Co. v. Bausch & Lomb Inc., 909 F.2d 1464, 1469, 15 USPQ2d 1525, 1528 (Fed. Cir. 1990) (emphasis in original). Thus, the functional limitations cited in the remarks do not distinguish the claimed apparatus from the structures of the prior art. Also, the functional limitations at issue do not fall within the purview of 35 USC 112, sixth paragraph, since Applicants have not invoked 35 USC 112, sixth paragraph, on the record and the mode selector is not recited in a “means for” clause.

Conclusion

THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Christopher Bottorff whose telephone number is (703) 308-2183. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m..

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Brian Johnson can be reached on (703) 308-0885. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Christopher Bottorff


BRIAN L. JOHNSON
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2600
3/2/64